

# SELECTION AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT PERSONNEL TRANSFORMATION

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## Introduction

The concept of Army transformation moves us beyond the idea of incremental change. Army transformation recognizes emerging and projected changes in the strategic, technological, and social environment, and generates doctrinal, organizational, and functional concepts to ensure that the Army can meet the new challenges associated with these changes. The role of soldiers in this transformation is stated plainly in the Army vision (2002): "The Army is people. Soldiers ... are the centerpiece of our formation."

The Army must manage its complex personnel needs and personnel support systems with the most effective and efficient automated tools available. Just as Army transformation must move beyond incremental change to meet the changed environment in which the Army is expected to operate, so too must personnel transformation move beyond incremental change to the existing personnel systems, policies, and procedures if these are to meet the requirements of the Objective Force. Current systems are barely sufficient in complexity, sophistication, and integration to meet existing needs and will

require a major overhaul to meet the needs of an information-intensive future Army.

While the architecture of future human resource information systems is critical, the information that is fed into this architecture is equally critical. The success of personnel transformation can be gauged by whether the systems put capable and motivated soldiers in place to perform the functions of the Objective Force. This article discusses information elements that support the identification and placement of such soldiers. These information elements will be used to match applicants to organizational needs. They support, first, the selection decision—determining who is qualified to serve in the Army. Next comes the classification decision—how are soldiers best matched to jobs to achieve maximum organizational benefit? Then, the promotion decision—who is best suited to advance to the next higher organizational level?

## Selection And Classification

Each of these decisions is based on judgments about what personal attributes are most critical to successful performance for the position

in question. At the beginning of the personnel selection process, the principal selection determinant is the combined score from the cognitive aptitude test battery, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). Also taken into account is whether the individual is a high school graduate.

Even before the Army transformation vision had taken hold, the potential benefits of expanding on these tools for enlisted selection purposes was considered. In the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences examined a variety of spatial, psychomotor, and motivational measures as candidates to augment the ASVAB. The results led to the administration of a new spatial test in the ASVAB and the use of a motivational instrument as a screening tool in an ongoing experimental program to expand the recruiting market known as GED (General Educational Development) Plus.

## Future Selection And Classification

Now our focus is on the future. We are examining how changes in the international environment and in

the Army are likely to lead to changes in the nature of jobs and in successful performance in these jobs. This requires researching a variety of written sources and interviewing experts on future doctrine, equipment, capabilities, threats, and other relevant factors. This information will then be consolidated and used to identify knowledge, skill, and behavioral attributes (KSBs) needed for future success.

An initial exploration of requirements for future jobs led to the identification of several KSBs needed during the next several years. Cognitive aptitude is likely to remain important, as are specific skills such as reading, oral communication, self-management, and working memory. A number of noncognitive or motivational attributes were also identified, including conscientiousness, emotional stability, and need to achieve.

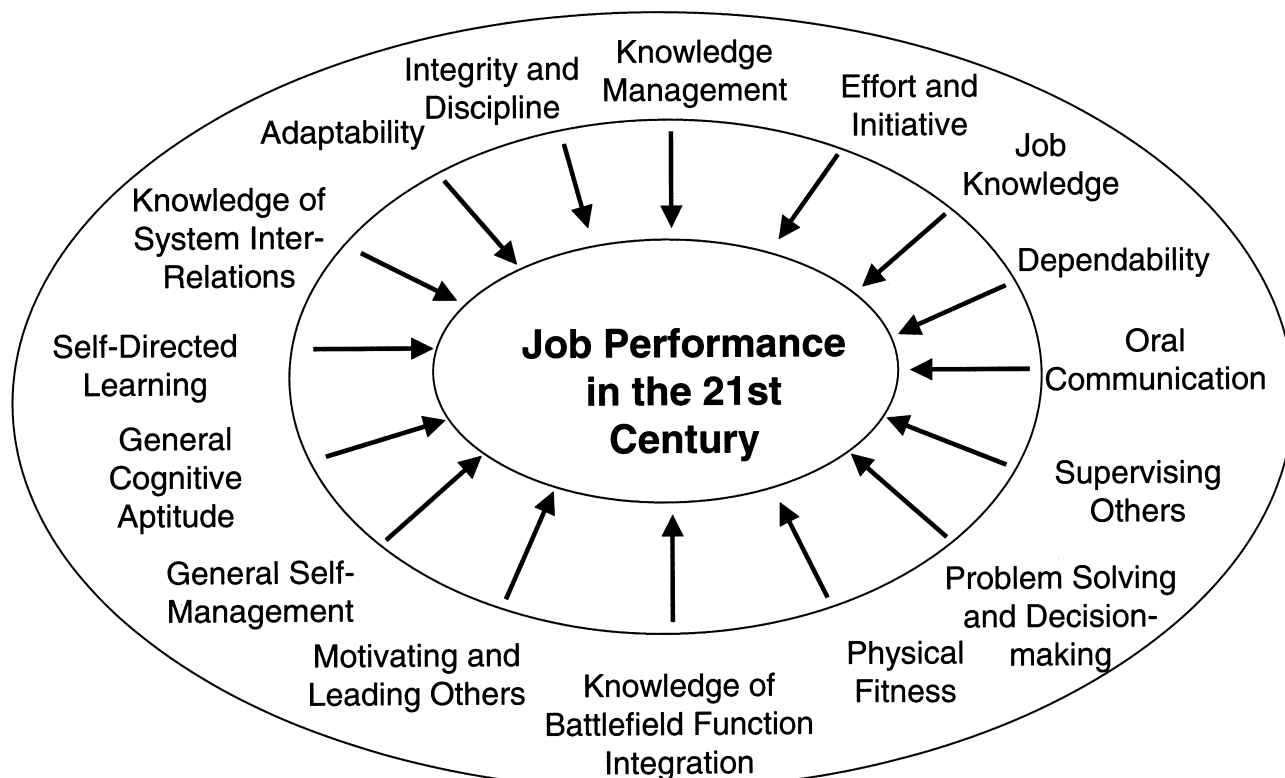
We are building on this earlier work, focusing on evolving concepts regarding the Objective Force and their impact on soldier jobs. Once the research to determine the revised list of KSBs is complete, the next challenge is how to measure them. Attributes that cannot be measured cannot be a factor in enlisted selection.

We will identify or develop measures of the most promising attributes, then evaluate the extent to which they can be used to improve on current selection measures. The evaluation will ask the question: How well do these measures predict performance? Because our measures are designed to predict performance in Objective Force jobs, we must strive to develop measures that address such performance.

For selection, we can examine job demands that are fairly common

across military occupational specialties. For classification, or individual job matching, we must identify demands that are differentially important across jobs or are unique to certain jobs or groups of jobs. The effort is complicated in a number of ways. First, one needs to identify the Objective Force jobs. Second, one needs to determine if these jobs can be clustered on the basis of common job demands so the effort of determining demands in multiple jobs can be scaled back to a reasonable level. Third, one needs to explore these jobs at a unit of analysis that will facilitate cross-job comparisons. Our first effort will involve identification of two or more groupings of future jobs that are sufficiently divergent in terms of their demands to likely require differing KSB profiles. Then, in a follow-up effort, we will identify more discrete job groupings to

## Projected Key NCO KSBs, 2000-2025



increase our ability to use differential classification.

## Promotion Decisions

The process of identifying the characteristics of those who should be promoted is similar to the process of identifying who should be selected. The issue remains: Who is best qualified to perform a particular job? In this case, the job is at the next higher organizational level. The same questions are asked: What are the job demands now, and how are these demands likely to be impacted by future changes? Then, the projected job demands are used as a basis for determining the required KSBs at the next level. We are nearing completion of a project, known as 21st Century NCOs (noncommissioned officers), which is focused on identifying these required future attributes and on developing promotion tools based on them.

From this project, we have identified a variety of KSBs. A number of those identified as important for junior enlisted soldiers were also identified as important for NCOs, including cognitive aptitude, oral communication skill, self-management skill, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and work motivation. In addition, a number of supervisory skills were identified as well as such complex attributes as understanding how to manage multiple battlefield functions.

Identifying these KSBs was an important first step, but until they could be measured, they could not be useful in guiding promotion decisions. A number of diverse measurement approaches were pursued, in part, to provide multiple measures of the same attributes and, in part, to address the particular challenges of measuring certain KSBs. Measurement approaches included self-reports of attitudes and prior personal history, situational and cogni-

tive aptitude measures, and interviews.

A final step was to determine whether these attributes actually could differentiate between those who could perform the NCO requirements of the 21st century from those who could not. Such an evaluation required the development of performance measures that were sensitive to the job requirements of the 21st century. The job dimensions identified by our future-oriented job analyses were translated into rating scales to be used by supervisors. The attribute measures have now been administered to a large number of job incumbents and linked to these supervisor ratings.

The findings supported the potential of these KSB measures for improving promotion decisions. Work motivation and leadership were found to have particularly strong relationships with performance ratings. Discussions with sponsor representatives concerning how these measures might be used in a modernized enlisted promotion system have already begun.

## Conclusion

A critical goal in the development of new personnel tools is to meld them into an integrated assessment and development program. Selection and promotion decisions are not independent—selection provides the pool of applicants from which NCOs are chosen. Nor are assessment and development independent. The attributes that are identified for selection and promotion are also ones that we want to develop in our enlisted soldiers. Thus, as we develop our assessment tools, we are also exploring ways that these can be used for developmental purposes. These tools will also be developed so that they are compatible with the vision of a transformed

automated personnel management system.

Our efforts in developing new enlisted assessment tools are paving the way for the envisioned development of new officer assessment tools. The challenges for future enlisted and officer selections are similar: both need to be based on Objective Force job requirements. The efforts involved in identifying the characteristics of Objective Force jobs will help lay the foundation for identifying KSBs for both enlisted and officer personnel. Many of the measures developed for enlisted assessment may have applicability, with perhaps some modifications, for officer assessment. The processes of officer selection and promotion are different from those of enlisted selection and classification, so the manner in which attribute measures are used for officer assessment may well differ from the manner in which they are used for enlisted assessment, but the goal in either case is the same—to identify the most qualified individuals for a particular job.

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